

During public hearings, the Commission heard testimony regarding the difficulty of finding qualified teachers for many districts.

In June, 2016, a DPI working group on school staffing issues published a final report describing the educator workforce shortage in Wisconsin. The report identified shortage areas in certain subjects, including math, science, special education, foreign languages, bilingual education, career and technical education, and music, and indicated that rural areas and large population centers both reported particular difficulty filling open positions.

Some public testimony heard by the Commission expressed concern that changes to the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) may prevent retired educators from returning to the classroom, particularly for short-term or part-time work or in areas of high need. Under 2013 Act 20, changes were made to the law regarding rehiring annuitants, including increasing the number of days a WRS participant must wait between termination of his or her employment and returning to covered employment with any WRS employer from 30 days to 75 days. Additionally, under prior law, an individual who terminated employment and received an annuity could choose one of the following options: (a) terminate the annuity and become a WRS participating employee again; or (b) continue to receive the annuity in addition to the earned wages from covered employment. Under Act 20, for any individual who is expected to work at least two-thirds of full-time employment in a WRS-covered position, the annuity must be terminated and no annuity payment can be made until the individual terminates their covered employment.

Other testimony expressed a desire to make teaching a more desirable profession for young adults entering the workforce. Loan forgiveness for educators with federal student loans who meet certain eligibility requirements is one method of doing so that exists under current law. To qualify for forgiveness of federal student loans, an educator must teach full-time for five consecutive years in a school or educational service agency designated as low-income by the federal U.S. Department of Education. Secondary school mathematics or science teachers and elementary or secondary special education teachers can qualify for \$17,500 in loan forgiveness, and all other teachers can qualify for \$5,000 in loan forgiveness. Loan cancellation is available for teachers with federal Perkins loans who work in a school serving low-income families, teach special education, or teach math, science, foreign languages, bilingual education, or another designated subject shortage area. Under the program, loans are cancelled in the following amounts: (a) 15% cancelled in each of the first and second years of teaching; (b) 20% cancelled in each of the third and fourth years of teaching; and (c) 30% cancelled in the fifth year of teaching.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend creating a teacher loan forgiveness program, modeled after the current-

law minority teacher loan program. Under the program, a student enrolled in an educator preparatory program leading to teacher licensure in a shortage area could receive a loan of up to \$10,000 per year, with an overall maximum of \$30,000. After graduating, for each year the student teaches full-time in an urban or rural school district, the student would be eligible for forgiveness of 25% of the loan. If the student does not meet the forgiveness criteria, the loan would be repaid at an interest rate of 5%. Provide \$1.5 million for the program beginning in 2020-21.

ALT 1	2019-20	2020-21
GPR	\$0	\$1,500,000

2. Recommend restoring pre-2013 Act 20 law regarding rehiring annuitants, including the 30-day break-in-service requirement and the choice of whether to terminate the annuity or continue to receive it.